



(See full image on page 16.)

Summer 2022

Newsletter of the Waukegan Historical Society

Presidents' Letters

A Word from the Outgoing President

Josh Bill

The Waukegan Historical Society is happy to report that as of the publication of this newsletter, the Waukegan History Museum is back open to the public. The new hours for the museum will be Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays from 12pm – 3pm. Thanks to our volunteers who serve as docents for the museum, and please do not hesitate to let us know if you are willing to volunteer in any capacity for the Waukegan Historical Society.

Nationally-renowned Harboe Architects, in consultation with the Waukegan Historical Society and our partner the Waukegan Park District, have completed the construction documents phase on what will be the Waukegan History Museum at the Carnegie. We are getting closer to our museum becoming a regional attraction for tourism, and we are most proud that Waukegan Public Schools students and Waukeganites of all ages will have a facility that instills a sense of pride and vibrancy right downtown. This newsletter will feature updates and history about the Carnegie that I am sure you will enjoy reading.

This will be my final "President's Letter." Our membership voted to approve three new officers and one new director for our board. Julio Argueta will serve as our new Secretary for the society. Julio has served on the Board of Directors for one year, and he has used his expertise as a lawyer, as well as his familiarity with the community to advise us through several key decisions throughout the year. Dane Morgan, Branch President of Gurnee/Waukegan Community Banks was elected to be the Treasurer of the society. During his year on the board, Dane has helped the society to think strategically and encouraged our board to ask the best questions as we enter a new era with the Carnegie Project. Dane, as well as

the rest of the Board of Directors have done well to prepare the historical society for a bright and prosperous future. Monica Burmeister was elected as a new director for our board. She brings a depth of business and nonprofit experiences to the table, and we are thrilled to have her with us.

Finally, Lori Nerheim is the new President of the Waukegan Historical Society. Ever since her arrival on our Board of Directors in 2018, Lori's leadership by example has done wonders for the board. She serves on the Nominating committee, and she is co-chair for the Carnegie Project committee, and she has also been the Interim Secretary for the board for the past year. Our Nominating Committee and voting members have selected the best individuals as we enter the home stretch with the Carnegie Project. Thank you to our outgoing officers; thanks also to the Board of Directors and our membership. As I close my final presidential letter, I am very optimistic about the future of the Waukegan Historical Society. Our membership and Board of Directors have worked hard to get us through the pandemic, continue our operations, and create wonderful opportunities for the future. Now, please welcome our new president, Lori Nerheim.



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A Word from the Incoming President

Lori Nerheim

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to serve as your Waukegan Historical Society President. I'm honored to step into this role at such a transformative time in the organization's history and energized as we continue to make significant progress on our expansion plans and soon launch the new Waukegan History Museum at the Carnegie.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to outgoing President Josh Bill for his two terms of service. Josh has been integral to many of the advances we have made, particularly in building strong community relationships and by sharing his passion for local history and education. As a beloved Waukegan High School history teacher and National History Teacher of the Year award recipient, we are very fortunate to have Josh's expertise and unique approach to teaching that engages students, community members and visitors in learning more about our shared and diverse history while encouraging everyone to have a voice. Josh will remain active on our board and serves on our Education, Publications, Library and Museum committees. He is playing a key role in helping shape our future exhibits and visitor experience, along with Bryan Escobar, Diana Dretske and Ty Rohrer.

The Waukegan Historical Society continues to find innovative ways to advance our mission, reach new audiences, and inspire people to connect with Waukegan's past, present and future. Thank you to our Board of Directors for their dedication, service and leadership, and our partners, members, donors and volunteers for their incredible support to make the society's work possible.

Waukegan is my hometown and I am thrilled to be working alongside such an exceptional group of people to make a positive, lasting impact on our community. I'm grateful for your support and welcome any feedback and ideas you have as we work together in the coming year.

Haines House Museum Resumes Regular Hours

We are excited to announce that regular open hours for the public to visit the Haines House Museum at Bowen Park has resumed starting June 1. We will continue to provide special tours during non-open hours by appointment as well.

This exciting news means that we need to build up our Saturday volunteer docent base again. If you are interested in learning the role of a docent for Saturdays at the museum, please reach out to Bryan Escobar at 847-336-1859 or 847-360-4749.

New hours:

Tuesdays, Thursdays,
Saturdays

12 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Research Library Update

The Research Library still remains open by appointment only. Volunteers right now are hard at work prepping the library for the move to the Carnegie. Work includes going through the files, books, and individual collections and putting together an inventory of the archives.

Traffic Box Moved

We are often asked, "When will we start to see construction at the Carnegie?" We are so very close to this reality, but noticeable changes are already underway.

One big improvement was moving the traffic box from the corner of Sheridan Road and Washington Street that partially blocked the front façade of the Carnegie. This was a joint effort of the City of Waukegan and the Waukegan Park District to get this accomplished. Thank you to the Mayor Taylor and the Waukegan City Council for their support of this small part of the project, as well as the project as a whole.

CPPI Funds Announcement

We are honored to have the support of the Carnegie Preservation Project, Inc. for our Carnegie restoration initiative.

The Carnegie Preservation Project, Inc. was formed in 1992 by concerned citizens following an announcement by the Waukegan City Council that a vote would take place to approve the demolition of the Waukegan Carnegie Library. Demolition concerns were halted, and the Carnegie Library was acquired by the Carnegie Preservation Project, Inc. in 1993.



Erny Bennett, 5, visited at the Waukegan Public Library Saturday night just as Jack Costello, restoration, entered, and looked the front doors but the last time.



Small Photos
By James McNeary
And Mike Vogel

The Waukegan Public Library, 3 N. Sheridan Road, street for the last time Saturday. The library is being moved to the new building at 128 N. County St. It is not yet known when all books of the old building can be moved.

From 1993 to 2007, the Carnegie Preservation Project, Inc., which consisted solely of volunteers, worked diligently to raise necessary funds to stabilize the building for a future end use. Their efforts were successful thanks to a dedicated team of citizen volunteers. The grand total of Carnegie Preservation Project, Inc. volunteer hours recorded was 8,727.

With the Carnegie Library stabilized, the Carnegie Preservation Project, Inc. returned the building to

the City of Waukegan. As part of the transaction, the City approved, through local ordinance, landmark preservation status on the Carnegie.

With the Carnegie Preservation Project's dream of the Carnegie becoming the new Waukegan History Museum, the group graciously transferred the remaining funds of the organization to the Historical Society for the project. The Carnegie Preservation Project, Inc. will be featured and honored in the Waukegan History Museum at the Carnegie so that future generations know of their great efforts to save the Carnegie.

What we are able to accomplish at the Carnegie today would not have been possible without the past efforts of the Carnegie Preservation Project, Inc.



Fix up or tear down!

SOME WELCOME to Waukegan!

We're speaking of the old Carnegie Public Library at the northeast corner of Washington Street and Sheridan Road.

The photo above shows the back side of the long-vacant building. This is the view seen by passengers arriving on Metra trains, if they look south. It also greets you in full force as you leave the station on the new approach to drive up to Washington.

Since buildings were razed east of Sheridan, to make way for the lakefront highway now under construction, motorists southbound also see some of the back of the building. When the highway is completed, many more motorists will see this blight on the landscape.

Northbound drivers on Sheridan, of course, see the front side, shown in the photo below. The front isn't the horrible eyesore the back is, but that's not saying much.

The building was constructed with a \$27,500 donation and opened Oct. 1, 1903. It ceased being a library in 1965 when the new library opened; the property was sold over to the city of Waukegan. For several years, in 1981, it was used for USO and other recreational facilities.

undated document c. 2001 from the files of the Carnegie Preservation Project, Inc.

CPPI Renovation Achievements

Building Improvements done with volunteer work, donations and grants

- Removal of vagrants and wild life from building
- Removal of approximately 220 yds of debris from building
- Removal and replacement of main roof beam element
- Two new sky lights and new roof curbing
- Removal and replacement of roof system, flashing, and parapet repair
- Removal of hazardous material pipe cover material "
- Removal of damaged non-functioning heating system: boiler, pipes, 75 radiators
- Removal of 3700 gallon fuel oil tank and remaining fuel oil
- Removal of non-functioning air condition system
- Restoration of power to the building (3 phase)
- Stabilization of bluff next to building
- Replacement of missing stone work on building
- New roof drainage system
- Removal of non-functioning chimneys
- Replanting of all decorative shrubs and plants
- Arrest of deterioration due to water damage

Callahan Family Support

There are so many people to thank for the upcoming restoration of the Waukegan Carnegie Library building but one particular family should be singled out for special praise. Harold and Joan Callahan and their children were huge supporters of Waukegan and especially the Waukegan Park District. Joan Callahan served for many years as a Commissioner and the family continues to support the District today.

In 2007 Joan decided to make a very generous donation to the District for the planned addition to the Waukegan History Museum in Bowen Park for which fund raising had just begun. Her donation of \$100,000 has been held by the Park District over the past 15 years in an interest bearing account which has grown to almost \$125,000. With full approval of the Callahan family that substantial gift is now being used, together with many other generous donations by Historical Society members and members of the public, to fund the restoration of the iconic, land-marked building.

The anonymous foundation's gift of \$5,000,000 along with state and federal grants as well as the gift of \$120,000 by the Carnegie Preservation Project is making this dream come true. We look forward to having Amy Callahan and Charlotte Callahan Wozniak walk through the newly completed Carnegie building to see the tangible results of their family's generosity.

Federal Funds Approved

Congressman Brad Schneider announced that the Waukegan Park District will receive \$3,000,000 from the federal government's Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022 to help fund the renovation of the historic Carnegie Library. Our Carnegie project was selected for this funding on many factors including the project strong economic impact to the local economy, the strong community support, as well as the educational resources that will become available for the local schools.

Congressman Brad Schneider stated, "Funding for the Waukegan Carnegie Library revitalization will increase foot traffic in the heart of Waukegan, transforming both the surrounding community and the local economy. The project's aim is for nearby businesses to see historic growth as a result of this investment, with independent analyses suggesting the revitalization will generate as much as \$5.3 million in local economic activity. I am proud to have helped secure funding for this transformative investment in the Waukegan community."

Jay Lerner, Executive Director of the Waukegan Park District, stated, "The Waukegan Park District is extremely grateful of the efforts of Congressman Brad Schneider to secure federal funding for the renovation of the Carnegie Library into the Waukegan History Museum. The museum project will benefit the community significantly. Once completed, the Waukegan History Museum at the Carnegie will be a regional destination that will boost tourism and strengthen the local economy."

We are so thankful for the many community organizations who submitted letters of support to Congressman Schneider for our project. We were especially touched by the wonderful letters written by students at Glen Flora and Cooke Magnet Elementary Schools to support the project. A great team effort by the entire community!

The Carnegie Preservation Project Inc. Spearheads the Rescue of Waukegan's 1903 Carnegie Library Building

By Wayne Munn

It was the early 1990s. There was breaking news and a call to arms. The City of Waukegan planned to demolish our 1903 Carnegie Library. It had been a gift to the citizens of Waukegan from steel magnate Andrew Carnegie.

In December 1965 Waukegan had opened a much needed new Public Library. But the landmarked Carnegie library building had been, and still was, mostly an important monument in the community and to author Ray Bradbury. The historic stone and brick Carnegie building occasionally hosted events for groups like the USO. The building was inadequately secured and the roof had begun to leak. Without immediate repairs the Century old landmark was doomed. A survey of the public showed that many residents wanted to save the Carnegie library.

The Carnegie Preservation Project Inc. (CPPI) formed as a not for profit to save the Carnegie building. Early on CPPI leaders and volunteers had the opportunity to learn from and work with Waukegan artist and respected activist Jim Harrington. Jim was a remarkable force in uniting the community and focusing CPPI efforts to bring cohesion to the "Save the Carnegie" movement. If not for the community-centric motivation of activist and artist Jim Harrington the bluff on which the 1903 Carnegie Library still proudly stands would have become an empty, grassy knoll.

The building remained a statuesque and a lasting monument on the Northeast corner of Washington Street and Sheridan Road. Countless people in Waukegan, and across the US and beyond, had gained reading skills thanks to Andrew Carnegie's gifts of free public libraries. In a town with a large immigrant population like Waukegan the library was a valuable resource. While library buildings were funded by Andrew Carnegie, the communities had to take on the responsibility of staffing and stocking them with books.

When the CPPI leaders reached out to Ray Bradbury he recalled falling in love with books in Waukegan's Carnegie. Ray was firmly with the "Save the Carnegie" campaign. Multiple community fundraising events were held and public awareness increased. Thanks to the efforts of community-minded attorneys, the City of Waukegan approved the transfer of ownership of the Carnegie building to the Carnegie Preservation Project.

Ray Bradbury traveled to Waukegan from Los Angeles to rally the community to save our, and his, beloved Carnegie Library. The momentum grew, but it took months spanning to years of support from hundreds of donors, volunteers, engineers, and architects to secure the Carnegie building then to make needed repairs to stabilize the building so it could someday play a beneficial role in the community.

That SOMEDAY has arrived.



A Minor in History

How Waukegan Got a Carnegie

Ali Schultz

My oldest memory features a public library. While my mom was in the hospital giving birth to my sister, my grandma was staying with me, and she took me to the local library one morning, ignorant of my mom's rule about checking out only five books. What I remember is the ride home – we'd stuffed so many books in the little red wagon that there wasn't room for my legs.

The idea of a free (well, taxpayer-supported) public library in every community is much younger than I imagined, beginning at the end of the nineteenth century and growing exponentially because of Andrew Carnegie's philanthropy. The library in my hometown that fostered my book greed was, just like Waukegan's current library, a replacement for an original building donated by Carnegie in the first decade of the twentieth century. There were once 106 such libraries in Illinois, and all but 17 are still standing, because, echoing the reputation of Carnegie steel, they were designed and constructed to last.

I was curious, though, about why and how Waukegan got one in the first place and the surrounding communities did not, and the answer lies with how closely the city met Carnegie's criteria at the time of the application. Winners of the library grant had to show that they both had enough people to warrant a library in the present and support a library into the future, which caused some creative population projections among smaller library-seeking towns, but which Waukegan, in the midst of an industrial boom, had no difficulty proving. Carnegie wanted each town to provide ten percent of the cost in addition to his gift, and agree to put

in at least that much yearly. For Waukegan, this meant only an additional \$500 total from taxpayers a year, as they'd asked for \$25,000 from Carnegie but were already appropriating \$2000 for a library. Each applicant town had to show that they already had a book collection, and that they could agree upon a city-owned site – and after some contention over the site, those conditions were met in Waukegan as well. Carnegie favored cities like Waukegan anyway – cities that were growing through industry, through the labor of immigrants, through the hard work of people committed to a better future for themselves and their families.

These library grants were personal to Andrew Carnegie. As a boy, he saw his dad struggle to make a living as a handloom weaver while their small Scottish town was shifting to factories, and there was neither money nor time nor resources for education. What education Andrew did get came from a Free School, which had been established by a local philanthropist. The family immigrated to America for a better life, but what that looked like at first was everyone working in a mill in Pennsylvania. Andrew's first job was a bobbin boy, and then he graduated to running a small steam engine, which he later described as "terrifying". He was twelve. He wrote in his autobiography that with this job he'd lie awake nights, imagining himself setting the steam too high and bursting the boiler and blowing up everyone around it.

His next and less-dangerous job was as a telegraph operator for the Pennsylvania Central Railroad, which brought him in contact with John Anderson, an educator and railroad superintendent, who opened his extensive personal library on Saturday nights to the working boys of Pittsburgh. It was through this generosity that Andrew Carnegie educated himself, and he wrote that he then "resolved, if wealth ever came to me, [to see to it] that other boys might receive opportunities similar to those for which we are indebted to Anderson". Indeed, his first

donated library outside of Scotland and Pittsburgh was to Emporia, Kansas, where Anderson later moved to start a school.

A few hundred miles west, the newly-named Waukegan, its population heading towards four thousand people, was encouraging citizens to stop by the office of the Waukegan Weekly Gazette if interested in doing some reading. An 1853 ad lists about fifty local and national publications, which you could peruse for fifty cents per quarter, except for “strangers” and out-of-towners who could read for free. There’s a Boy’s Magazine listed, but nothing for girls, suggesting that either girls were expected to look at the women’s housekeeping or fashion magazines or were not welcome at all. Writers for the newspaper often summarized a newly-arrived popular magazine’s content, encouraging potential readers to stop by and read selected articles, like an 1850s version of a supermarket checkout line. The thought of one copy of a very desirable magazine, potentially the only new thing to read all month, needing to be shared among several thousand people, while not quite on the level of an exploding boiler, terrifies me.

While Carnegie was building his empire and investment portfolio, Waukegan was building interest in a permanent library, but had a hard time finding an effective, sustainable system. In 1858, the most successful of these was organized by a group of gentlemen who were studying business through Commercial College courses, calling themselves the Joint Stock Association Library. They pooled their books on politics, science, and religion, wrote their names on the flyleaf, and rented a room at the courthouse. It seems to have been more of a trading system though – if you left a book, you could take one, and patrons were also expected to read each other’s books in order to have “beneficial” group discussions. They also formed a chess club, and advertised, again likely only to men, evenings of leisure and newspaper reading and conversation.

When the courthouse burned down in 1875, that

library was demolished. Altogether, six or seven subscription libraries had been attempted and failed during Waukegan’s first fifty years, so when the newly-minted Sesame Club, a women’s group dedicated to the study of literature and the arts, suggested starting a free library in 1894, they were met with a collective eye-roll from the city government. The women were indulgently encouraged to try where many (exclusively men’s groups, as far as I can tell in researching this) before them had not succeeded. It seems like the Sesame Club’s ultimate success was due to a multifaceted approach: they got many people from all over the city to donate books and money and thus feel invested, they rented a room downtown and showed that it could work for a full year, November 1895 to 1896, and perhaps most importantly, they worked together with their husbands, many of whom were aldermen or city officials or prominent citizens, to form a Library Association that spoke for them. It was a representative of this Library Association who wrote to Andrew Carnegie in late 1900 or early 1901.

By the mid-1890s, Carnegie was in his sixties and thinking about his legacy. He publicly announced that he was going to give his fortune away before he died. Articles about Carnegie’s activities, travels, that one time he didn’t show up for jury duty in New York, if he was richer than John D. Rockefeller or what, appeared quite often even in local papers like the Waukegan Daily Sun. His criteria were widely published and gifts superlatively celebrated, as were his views on the uplifting power of education. A Waukegan citizen could have sat comfortably in the Sesame Club’s burgeoning public library and read an interview with Carnegie in a magazine where he said he wanted to give to the “industrious and ambitious; not those who need everything done for them, but those who, being most anxious and able to help themselves, deserve and will be benefited by help from others.” How could she not look around Waukegan and think, “isn’t he talking about us?”

Carnegie believed, as the Chicago Tribune said, that “the foundation stone of the republic is education”. Few seemed to care about the apparent hypocrisy of a steel magnate who gave his workers one day off a year (the 4th of July) but who wanted them to have the opportunity to seek knowledge in their free time. He was not an activist – an immigrant himself, he was called things like “the canny Scotsman” in print long after his company was a symbol of American wealth, as if he was still not quite American. And he didn’t address social inequalities directly, preferring to build separate libraries for Black Americans in southern states rather than insisting on one integrated town library. But he understood from his personal experience that lives could be changed by free access to books, and he had the money to help that change come about for millions of Americans.

Carnegie Library interior
by Jay Stephen.



Most of the libraries built with slivers of Andrew Carnegie’s fortune are no longer libraries, like Waukegan’s. The buildings were outgrown, or the maintenance got too expensive, or the population of the once-thriving town dwindled. A lot of the buildings are still a part of the civic life of the communities, though – there are city halls, a genealogy archive, a home for disabled veterans, and of course, a few museums. So when you walk through the doors of the Waukegan History Museum sometime next year, you won’t need a wagon to drag home the latest bestsellers, but you’ll be contributing to a revitalized, twenty-first century vision of Carnegie’s project – building the republic, stone by stone, with everything you learn within its walls.

Carnegie Library
Rededication, 1993.



Thank You!

New Building Fund Donors

Carnegie Preservation Project Inc.
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Ann Darrow
Ann E. Rippel
Ashley Bowcott
Benjamin Hughes
Brenda Colon
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NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____
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Student	\$5.00
Individual	\$20.00
Family	\$30.00
Patron, Organization	\$100.00
Life, Individual	\$150.00
Life, Couple	\$300.00
My additional gift	\$ _____

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Waukegan Historical Society.

Volunteer

Please contact me about volunteer opportunities.

Waukegan Historical Society

Founded in 1968, the Society collects, preserves, interprets, and exhibits significant materials about the history of the Waukegan area. The Society, in cooperation with the Waukegan Park District, operates the History Museum and Raymond Library and publishes this quarterly newsletter.

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Visit our website for more information
about events, exhibits, and our
extensive library.

www.waukeganhistorical.org

Waukegan History Museum in Bowen Park

1917 N. Sheridan Road
Manager of Cultural Arts: Ty Rohrer
847-360-4744
troher@waukeganparks.org
Museum Curator: Bryan Escobar
847-360-4749
bescobar@waukeganparks.org
Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays
12 pm - 3 pm

John L. Raymond Research Library

1911 N. Sheridan Road
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HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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